THE

Protestant Conformist:

OR, A

PLEA

FOR

MODERATION,

Contained in a

LETTER

FROM

One Conforming MINISTER to another:
and His ANSWER to it.

LONDON:

Printed for *Tho. Parkhurst*, at the *Bible* and *Three Crowns* in *Cheapside* near *Mercers-Chappel.* M. DC. LXXIX.

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Dear and Reverend Sir,

IF you knew how ſeverely I charge my ſelf with my remiſneſs in anſwering your laſt, you would more readily pardon me; and when I conſider your candor and moderation, I cannot (upon my involuntary tranſgreſſions) deſpair of your Clemency: for amongſt all thoſe worthy Qualities that adorn you, and whereby you adorn the Goſpel, and our Function, That vertue or rather grace of Moderation has graven the moſt deep and indelible characters of endearedneſs upon me; and though your worth has placed you above contempt, and not left ſo bright a Taper under a Buſhel, yet I could even wiſh for the ſakes of others, that you were poſted in a more conſpicuous Eminency, that (in this ſenſe alſo) *your Moderation might be known unto all men.*

And now that I have ſo grateful a Theme, I cannot ſo eaſily take leave of it, but that I muſt beg your pardon if (waving till the next opportunity ſome other things I ſhould have mentioned to you) I go on to bemoan the too evident and epidemick want of this Chriſtian vertue amongſt thoſe of us that juſtly pretend to the beſt form of Chriſtianity, as moſt ſuitable to the revealed will of God, and the Pattern of the moſt pure and Primitive times: For as to our adverſaries objecting of Novelty upon us, it has been ſo fully and clearly redargued, that I need not meddle with it. That I would be at, is, To convince my Brethren, the Sons of my Mother, of the abſolute neceſſity and ſeaſonableneſs of this Grace of Moderation, as the *Cauſa ſine qua non* of the ſupporting and continuance of our Reformed Religion. I tell you no news, becauſe you have ſometimes obſerved it to me, That our *Roman* Adverſaries (who like their Pagan Predeceſſors will *per fas aut nefas* be maſters of the World) can manage any Game, Play on any Inſtrument, work with all Tools, tranſcend *Proteus* in change of ſhapes, have while we ſlept (with the aſſiſtance of their Maſter) ſown Tares in our Field, which now they ſo carefully water and cheriſh that they expect a plentiful Harveſt, I mean thoſe Diſſentions and Animoſities amongſt Proteſtants, and to that degree of bitterneſs, clamour, and reviling each other, that they hope it ſhall not end there, but that (their other great Engines having lately miſcarried) they may ſit ſtill a while and ſee us with delight carrying on their work for them: how well do they know that a Kingdom or Church divided againſt it ſelf cannot ſtand? And though they need not to be Diſciples to the *Florentine* (for *Ignatius* his Conclave has far out-done him yet that ſhort *Recipe*, of *Divide & Impera*, they find ſuch a never-failing Medicine, as they have thereby Horſe-leach'd a great deal of the beſt blood in *Europe*. What Quacks are theſe in moſt Princes Courts? Who knows not what their Reſidence at *Vienna*, and their hanging there (more cloſe than Pendants) at that ſoft Head of that Spread (or rather ſhatter'd) Eagle, has done? how have they drawn him to make Enemies of good Subjects in *Hungary*, becauſe Proteſtants? and by his inexorable cruelty to them for Religions ſake, to pull down with his own hands the Ramparts of *Chriſtendom*, by forcing thoſe who heretofore were the *Remora* in the *Creſcents* Progreſs Weſtward, to take Protection under the growing but more prudent *Turk?* How theſe Earwigs ſwarm'd about *Madrid* and the *Eſcurial* whilſt there was any likelihood of the *Auſtrian* Families doing their work, and how upon the decline of that they have crawld about the *Flower de Lis*, (for theſe Summer-Inſects do adore Eaſtward, and have no Deity but the riſing-Sun); how they (the moſt ſedulous ſervants in *Vulcan*'s ſhop) have plied their Bellows at the *Louvre*, till their inflations have ſo ſwoln that already great-enough mind, that the beſt part of *Europe* will hardly hold it, and moſt Nations of it have ſmarted for preſuming by juſt defence to interrupt his growing Glory? and how they have horn-bound for ſeveral years paſt the *Bavarian* Duke, though never without a conſiderable Army, from aſſiſting his Neighbour Princes againſt the *Galick* Invaſions, they are ſtrangers to the Affairs of *Europe* that know not.

And the *Paris* Cabal can tell us, that that fine Texture of ſetting the Northern Princes of the Reformed Religion by the ears, was firſt ſpun in *Loyola*'s *Parlour*, though wrought up by *Pariſian* Statiſts. I might trace the *Veſtigia* of theſe Helliſh blood-hounds through many Countries, till I ſhould loſe my ſelf and weary you; but refer you to Mr. *Wadſworth*'s Memoirs (which you have ſeen e're this) for ſome of their Projects in *Germany*, wherein they eſteemed it a Maſter-piece ſo to order the matter, as to ſet a *Calviniſt* Prince againſt a *Lutheran*, and ſo *è contra*.

But now, *Sir*, having been long enough a Tranſmarine Obſerver, (and conſidering the caſe laſt mentioned makes me a good Errant home) I conclude it more than high time to return, for I find they are arrived before me: And how willingly would I lend my Optick-Glaſſes to thouſands of Proteſtants (otherwiſe I hope loyal and well qualified) whoſe will or uncharitable humour to hanging in their light, hinders them from ſeeing how buſie at work theſe Scorpions are amongſt us: we need not to be ſent back to 88, or the fifth of *Novemb.* Anno 1605. Theſe Hiſtories are believed by all good Proteſtants, though *Apocryphal* to them who would act the ſame over again; and indeed if we will take their own words *ex poſt facto*, they were never guilty of Treaſons, bloody

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Conſpiracies and Tragedies, no not they. Oh what omnipotent Prieſts have they ! that can, as they make a god of Bread, make Treaſon and Guilt after a ſhrift to loſe their nature ! and the moſt enormous Traitors like Children unborn, innocent of all ſins but original, and that but ſome of them!

The worſt on't is, that not only they have the Braſs to impoſe on the World, but that ſome of our ſelves have the facility (I dare not call it charity) to take theſe counterfeits for good coyn, and forſooth out of animoſity to other Proteſtants to believe the *Papiſts* innocent. I defie the beſt Scholar of the Lame *Spaniſh* Soldier to help forward the Popiſh Deſign more effectually than we ſhould do, were we but all of this mind ; for my part, far be it from me to palliate or extenuate Treaſons or Rebellions under the Cloak of Religion and Reformation, for theſe inſtead of ſetting a better gloſs fix a deeper ſtain, or more inexpiable guilt and horrid brand upon the Action and Actors ; yet when all is done you are ſatisfied as well as I that in the beginnings of our late wretched Wars one might ſay of many of the other Party as of thoſe that went with *Abſalom*, they went in the ſimplicity of their hearts, and they knew not any thing ; to my knowledg many of them did as much as poſſible condole the horrid conſequences of that War, and did believe as you and I alſo did, that the Finger of *Joab* had an unſeen motion in thoſe affairs, though perſonally and viſibly acted by men whoſe after climbing to the ſeat of Government ſhew'd what was before in their hearts ; as he ſees little in the world that knows not that the ſelf-ſame Deſign may not be endeavoured and driven on by men of contrary Principles, and for contrary ends. I had not inſiſted on this ſo well known already to you, but that I hear with ſome grief our young Levites (who neither ſaw nor ſuffered what we did) Hectoring at that rate againſt ſome innocent Proteſtants, and which my Ink it ſeems ſhould bluſh to recite, declaring that they would rather cloſe with the *Papiſts*, than admit of compoſure with Diſſenting Proteſtants.

It is an ordinary Obſervation, That a quarrel amongſt neareſt Relations is often moſt grievous ; but when one of ſuch for meer revenge will unite himſelf to the mortal enemy of both, who will not affirm him void of not only grace but good nature ! Oh degenerate Age !

Where is that Evangelical peace and love, our Saviours bleſſed Legacy ! where's that fervent charity ! is it turned into burning hatred ? Where's that Moderation we ſhould ſhew unto all men ! is it degenerated into the moſt inexorable rancor ? That ſheep ſhould ſtray and ſometimes encounter one another in the abſence of the wolf is not ſtrange ; but when the wolves come, they at leaſt unite, and not having power to reſiſt, flie together. That theſe wolves of *Romulus* abound amongſt us, all know that are not already guld by them. But to elude the care of our vigilant Shepherds, theſe Monſters worſe than that which *Hercules* wreſtled with, have dwindled the Wolf into a Fox, and to avoid ſuſpicion have cunningly cover'd that too with Lambs wool, that it requires much circumſpection to diſcover them.

He that hath read the Legend of their Clowniſh St. *Francis*, and the ſtory of the *Illuminati*, will eaſily believe who are the Fathers of our Quaking Sect, though themſelves poſſibly know not ; and it is too evident that they have ſcrewed themſelves, and transfuſed their Influences into all the ſeveral Perſwaſions amongſt us, none excepted. And as they take the cawls of our ſheep in the fields for compounding their Fire-balls to burn our Cities, ſo in compenſation they inſtill wilder fire under the notion of zeal, (an excellent grace of it ſelf, but miſguided, of moſt diſmal effects) into the ſheep of the great Shepherd, to the renewing of the complaint, *Homo homini Lupus*. And without controverſie, if they find their expected ſucceſs, theſe *Flambeaus* will much more prompt their work, than thoſe they beſtowed ſo freely towards the deſtroying of our Mother-city in 66.

And that we may better conjecture what they are doing elſewhere, I ſhall give you a ſkantling of what we obſerved in my own Pariſh, though too late taken notice of, elſe probably the world might have known the perſons as well as the deſign : Two Gentlemen pretty well accoutred took up a Lodging together, they ſeem'd no contemptible perſons, nor wanted moneys, they both wore Perukes, and which made ſome the more ſuſpicious of them) had conſiderable variety, and differing much in colour, yet ſeldom made uſe of their Flaxen ones in Town, but as one of the Maids of the houſe obſerved, he that rode abroad oftenеſt took one of that ſort in his Coat-pocket ; the Neighbourhood begun to imagine them Highway-men, but one of them ſeldom riding abroad during their ſix Months ſtay here, and their orderly *Decorum* and converſe, begot a better opinion of them ; one was obſerved to go frequently to the meetings of Diſſenters, and there behave himſelf as ſeriouſly as any of them ; the other when he was not out of Town (for he commonly ordered his Journeys on Friday or Saturday, and returned on Monday) would moſtly come to the Pariſh-Church, and to any ones ſight demean himſelf very devoutly : He would ordinarily as he could find opportunity be in the company of good Conformiſts, and if none elſe hapned to ſpeak of Church-affairs he would break the Ice, and moſtly begin with magnifying the Church of *England* as the beſt conſtituted in the world ; and after a large Harangue (for he could ſpeak with a Grace) would bemoan the Diviſions in it, and conclude with the neceſſity of extirpating all Diſſenters root and branch ; for elſe, ſays he, thoſe *Samaritans* will never reſt till they have razed it to the very ground. This was his ordinary Theme, though with ſome variation of words, till one time a good Neighbour of mine replied upon him : *Sir*, 'Tis a true ſaying, it's eaſier to give than take Counſel ; how do you practiſe what you adviſe to, while it appears your

Comerade,

Comerade your bosom-friend is one that frequents Conventicles, and is daily in the company of such, cannot you either win him or discard him? Oh, *Sir*, says he, I must tell you he is my intimate friend of a long standing, and I can digest his conversation in all things but that, which for good reasons I do a little indulge, for by him I have in this, as well as other places where we have resided (my Neighbour thought this slipt undesignedly from him) the advantage of knowing their secret discourses and machinations against the Church, and thereby the means of justly inciting the zeal of such good men as you against this generation of Vipers. This stirred up the choler of an honest Mechanick that had quietly listened all this while, that he broke silence thus: For my part I neither like you nor your friend; and it's well if you be not brethren in evil, or like *Samp∫on*'s Foxes that you turn tails to do mischief; 'tis well known in the Town that I go constantly to Church, and yet (I hope here's no Informers here) I often hear an honest Minister preach elsewhere, and I hope my care of being instructed for another world will neither offend the Justices, nor the Parson. If I had heard any preach sedition, I would have quickly (as it is my duty) have acquainted the Magistrates with it. But I tell you, (and then he spoke with more impatience) I never heard a man in my life talk so disloyally as your companion, so that I have carefully avoided his company of late; and he has so bedawbed the Church of *England*, and rendered the fears of Tyrannical usage from them so formidable, and that they would use us worse than *Papists*, that I believe his design was to turn us *Papists*; and however most of the people that have any degree of Prudence and sobriety could wish him with his fellows in *Newgate*; yet there's one or two that I fear he has perverted, and it may be we shall hear more of him, or you elsewhere; for I heard this very day of one of your haunts not far from this place.

This smart Reply of an inconsiderable man, was rebuked by some as too malepert to a stranger of seeming quality; but approved by others, as likely to have in it as much of Truth as he wanted of Patience. The Gentleman concerned, though he could not keep his colour from changing, yet keeping his countenance as well as he could; said, Gentlemen, I have sojourned now about six Months amongst you, and I hope none has found incivility from me, neither have I till now encountred any rudeness from any person, to the honour of your Town I speak; and now that this mean person whose imployment is about the feet, should thus flee in my face, and to express his causeless pique against me, turn all his Tools into Awls to gore that Reputation my fair deportment has obtained amongst you, 'tis somewhat grievous; but when you have known me as long as him, you will know how little I have deserved to be thus accosted.

Hereupon the Company broke up, some of whom came and related the whole to me; my advice was that they should acquaint the Magistrates, and take a Constable with some assistance to search their Chamber, which (the day being far spent) they resolved to do next morning. But before many people in the Town were up, these hopeful Chickens had taken the wing; and notwithstanding all our care by Messengers and Letters, where we imagined they had haunted, we could meet with no further satisfaction than that our Town was well quit of them; and that by their designed evil, this good is arrived to us, that my Parishioners of all sorts live in more love and charity than heretofore: those of both parties that have been most enflamed by these *Boutefeus* to the greatest height of animosity, being most ashamed that they should have been over-acted by those *Roman* Engines. Some of the Servants of that Inn where they Lodged, have since (which they considered not in time) told several stories of having seen Beads and other Trinkets too tedious now to recite. The story and design are plain enough, they need no Comment.

Some that are backward to believe any thing against such men, will be ready to say, *Quorsum hæc perditio*, would they take such care and pains to play at such small games? With the leave of such incredulous, this is no small game; for as I hinted before, this is their chief though after-game, and as like to do their Jobb for them as any enterprize they ever undertook.

For my own particular I shall, by Gods assistance, keep my station, and I hope rather grow than decline in that grace of Moderation I so much prise and praise in you; and if some of our Tribe will go on to Lord it over Gods Heritage, instead of being Ensamples to their Flock, or learning of Christ to be meek and lowly in spirit: If others will be smiting their fellow servants, &c. I shall make it my Prayers and constant endeavour that when my Lord and Master comes he may not find me so doing.

Dear Sir, I was not so confident of any worth in what I could observe or relate, but that I was about to caution you to avoid exposing it; but sith that might frustrate the end for which I have given you this trouble, I leave it to your own Prudence to communicate as you think fit. I am,

SIR,

Septemb. 13. 1679.

Your unworthy Fellow-servant,

N. P.

An Answer to the former LETTER.

Reverend Sir,

ALthough your affections do blind your judgment, to think better of me than I deserve, yet I hope you will always find me a true lover and practicer of that moderation, which (is so much my duty, and which) you so much adore. I am very well contented with the Station in which God hath set me; High places will not suit with such weak heads as mine: I am not sorry I am out of that temptation, lest a Vertigo should take me, and make me fall down the precipice which lyes before me. I cordially approve of the honest design of your ingenious Letter, and have taken the liberty (which you did not deny me) to publish it, with my own approbation of it.

He must wilfully shut his eyes, that will not see how busie the Jesuits and Romish Emissaries are, both at home and abroad, to promote their grand design; and how all things are lawful with them, that are useful to promote their Catholick Cause: Their late desperate hellish Plot against the person of a Prince so full of clemency towards them, and against our Civil and Religious Liberties, as English men and Protestants; their devillish designs to destroy our persons, and to enslave our consciences and posterities, may justly raise our just indignation against them; and put us upon study and endeavours, to beget a right understanding between all true Protestants, and not to narrow, or weaken the interest of our Church, by our hot childish contentions and divisions; but to unite and strengthen it what we can, against the common enemy that is undermining of it. Alas! our young raw heads grow giddy, and, I fear, gaze so much at the golden Cup, that they will be easily tempted to drink of the poisonous abominations contained in it. Nothing is more obvious to common observation, than the Jesuits transforming themselves into all shapes, and mingling themselves with all parties, to heat and heighten mens spirits, and to foment and widen differences between true Protestants: And as no party can excuse or clear themselves from having been abused by them, so all had need to be watchful lest they give advantage and encouragement to them. It's pleasant to read the story acted in your Parish, and the wise improvement and advantage that both you and your parishoners make of it. I heartily pray, that both you and I may obtain mercy from God, to be faithful and diligent in our work, That whilst others are found eating and drinking with the drunken, *and smiting their fellow servants*; we may be like *that faithful and wise Steward, whom his Lord will make ruler over his houshold, to give them their portion of meat in due season.*

We have two of the most precious, excellent things in the world committed to our trust, *viz.* The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, and the precious souls of men, and if we did more seriously mind the discharge of our trust, we should find little heart or leasure to quarrel with others about trifles. I cannot but bewail the unseasonble heats of our younger fry, whose bitter zeal runs out against persons and things which they do not understand. How nauseous is it to sober ears, to hear a Hectoring youngster let fly at *Jack Calvin*, whom our Reverend Prelates and Doctors of the Church (who were better Champions for the Church of *England*, than these Novices are like to make) did never mention without reverence and respect; as is evident to any versed in the Writings of A. Bp. *Whitgift*, Bp. *Andrews*, Bp. *Bilson*, Dr. *Willet*, &c? Though perhaps it's but a man of Straw of their own making, that these valiant Champions are crowing over: And to hear these inveigh against our first and most zealous Reformers, for some different apprehensions, or expressions, about some abstruser and darker points, which (themselves have never studied nor understood) and the Articles of the Church of *England* seem so much to favour, is loathsom to sober minds; and begets an opinion in those that have any prejudice against, or are dissenters from the Church of *England*, that we are returning again to *Rome*, and enemies to the Reformation they first promoted. Again, the putting all dissenters in the same rank, and bespattering them with the names of Schismaticks, Factious, and Seditious (though many of them do not break communion with us) to me seems very harsh and unreasonable, if not unjust. It's well known to the world, there be many learned, sober, godly men amongst them (some whereof, you and I have the happiness of a profitable acquaintance, and sweet conversation with) who though they be not satisfied to do some things the Law requires, (and which our Church might well spare, if our Rulers saw meet to dispense with them) that otherwise are as true to, and some of them as zealous, able Champions for the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, as any of our selves. This fooliish dividing humour, helps to widen, and keep open the difference between true Protestants; and mens distances from, and unacquaintedness with each other, makes them to look upon one another as Hobgoblins, and frightful apparitions; whereas a more familiar acquaintance and con-

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verse together, would let men see that they are not such Bugbears and monsters, as some fiery Zealots on both sides represent them to be. When I came first to this place, my Predecessor (who was a *Don Furioso* against Dissenters, and looked upon himself thereby as better qualified for the Preferment which he obtained) told me I must beware of such persons in my Parish that were dangerous, factious, and turbulent fellows; and of such a Minister (who preached amongst them) as a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition. But upon a little trial and observation, I found they were the most serious diligent Auditors I had; and upon a further enquiry after them, and acquaintance with them, I perceived they were such as lived most conscientiously in the practice of the great unquestionable duties of Christianity in all my Parish. I saw none so charitably disposed upon any good occasion; none more just in their dealings, none more ready or willing to give me my just dues; none more peaceable among their neighbours, striving to prevent or compose differences; none more careful to sanctifie the Sabbath, to instruct their Children and Servants; and to pray in their Families, making conscience both of first and second Table Duties; and in one word, ready to every good work. I wish I could say so of all those that glory to be stiled *true Sons of the Church of England*; and which he commended to me as such, whose zeal runs out mainly, if not only for Rites and Ceremonies, and will cry devoutly on the Lords day with us in the publick Liturgy, *Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners*; and yet live all the week without any open or solemn acknowledgment of God in their Families. And as for the Minister he gave such a character of, I found him an holy, learned, modest, self-denying man, who seems to have no design but to get to Heaven himself, and to get as many thither with him as possibly he can. He is frequently my Auditor, and I have much pleasing conversation with him. It's the grief of my soul that we cannot take such men into our Pulpits (without offence), who if they might but have that liberty, would never run into corners, as we now drive them. And this Gentleman (to shun all occasions of offence) never Preaches in the time of our publick Service, but the people come constantly to hear me, and when we have done, he Preaches to them, and many others go to hear him, which I am not offended at, but rather bless God for such an helper in my work.

And truly we may talk what we will of the Church of *England*, but if we do not take care to build up the Church of God, and encourage men to serious diligence about the business of Salvation, we may please our selves with such a notion, but neither God nor man will be pleased with us. It's no part of our prudence nor interest, (I am sure none of our duty, to widen the breaches, and weaken the interest of true Protestants, but rather to study all amicable and peaceable ways, to bring things to a better composure and to strengthen one anothers hands against the common enemy. It was no pleasing sight to me, to see so many of our Function to shew so much zeal and heat (at our late Election of Knights for this Shire to serve in Parliament) for such a Gentleman —— who though he may be an honest Gentleman, and might serve his Country faithfully for ought I know; yet both you and I know that he is untried, and a younger inexperienced man, and never manifested that zeal and courage for the Protestant Religion, and the Property of the Subject (which are the two things at this time chiefly to be looked after) as his Competitor hath done. And whether he be sufficiently ballasted, and fortified against the temptations he might meet with in such a station, is doubtful to all, especially to those that consider how the *Papists* generally fall in with him, and the charge he is at (whether at his own cost, or others, is not material) to procure it. I know both you and I are exposed to the censure of some of our Brethren for not voting with them; and reproached for being for a Fanatick or Presbyterian (though the Gentleman is known to hold communion with the Church of *England*, and as conformable as the Law requires.) And truly if sobriety and seriousness, and zeal for the Protestant Religion, and the Properties of *Englishmen*, must denominate men for Fanaticks, and Presbyterians, we shall give the party so stiled, a great reputation and veneration in the minds of men, and draw contempt upon our own heads; and if we go on at this rate, we shall make *Ichabod* to sigh out five groans more for our Church; and instead of advancing the honour and reputation of the Church of *England*, we shall but bring further odium, and scorn and reproach upon her. I know there are many worthy men of the Church of *England*, whose sobriety, and seriousness, and learning, and zeal, and moderation, doth appear to all men, which are a grace and an honour to her; but her spurious off-spring are as little pleased with them as with Dissenters themselves. And because they will not rail at, and revile and reproach them that differ from them in lesser things (though the Apostle spends a whole Chapter to teach us forbearance in these things, *Rom.* 14. and our Master hath set us a contrary example, which we are commanded to follow. 1 *Pet.* 2. 21, 23. and we are called hereunto, 1 *Pet.* 3. 8, 9.) they reckon them no true friends to the Church of *England*. But I hope you and I have not so learned Christ, as to be shamed or frighted out of our duty, by such as know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. We are satisfied in our Consciences to conform to the Discipline and Ceremonies of the Church of *England*, and judg the things required not *tanti* to make us lose the liberty of our Ministry for not conforming to them. Though we dare not so severely censure others who profess they cannot in conscience submit to them. (And they have manifested the truth of their profession by exposing themselves and families to wants and necessities, to scorns and reproaches for not doing of it.) For men may talk what they please, but I can

I can never believe that learned, ſober, godly, wiſe men, as (bating their differences) their greateſt enemies muſt confeſs many of them to be, ſhould meerly out of wilfulneſs, humour, peeviſhneſs and faction, keep off from theſe things, to expoſe themſelves and families to ſo many troubles and inconveniences for nothing. For how cenſorious ſoever we are againſt them, I wiſh (for the honour of the Church of *England*) it be a groundleſs cenſure of ſome (no enemies to the Church of *England* I can aſſure you) that profeſs to fear, that if ever Popery ſhould be eſtabliſhed by a Law in *England* (which God forbid) there would not be that number of Nonconformiſts to it, as was found at St. *Bartholomews*, 1662. You and I may heartily wiſh that they ſaw things with our eyes. But whileſt men have ſuch different apprehenſions of things, and the Apoſtles rules are ſo expreſs in this caſe, *Rom.* 14. 5. and again, *verſ.* 22, 23. we dare not but obſerve thoſe excellent rules the Apoſtle gives us in that Chapter, which we could earneſtly deſire all our Brethren would ſtudy and practice; and to as many as walk according to theſe Rules, mercy and peace ſhall be upon them, as upon the *Iſrael* of God. It's ſad to ſee how we gratifie the *Papiſts*, and ſerve their deſigns; and when one Plot hath miſcarried, they are ſo ſucceſsfully carrying on another, and laugh in their ſleeves to ſee what fools they can make of us, to have their work done to their hands, and can ſail faſter and ſafer with a ſide-wind than they could with a full gale! Oh how they hug themſelves to ſee Proteſtants ſet together by the ears, and like *Solomon*'s fooliſh woman pulling down her houſe with her own hands. How many daily under the vizard of the Church of *England*, by ſpecious Pamphlets, and cunning inſinuations, would make Proteſtant diſſenters ſeem worſe than *Papiſts*: So that whoſoever ſhall but offer to ſpeak of any danger from the *Papiſts*, or move for a vigorous proſecution of the Plot, he is preſently branded for a Fanatick, and oppoſed by them that pretend to be of the Church of *England*, as the moſt dangerous of the two. If the Diſſenters had been convicted of conſpiring to take away the Kings life, to ſubvert the Government, to alter the Eſtabliſhed Religion, had a ſcore of them been Executed at *Tyburn* upon that account, what could have been ſpoken or written more ſeverely againſt them? A ſtranger that knows nothing of the late Plot, taking his meaſures, and making his judgment by the Popular out-cry and clamour, which ſome that profeſs to be of the Church of *England* make, from the Preſs and in diſcourſe againſt them, cannot poſſibly believe otherwiſe than that *Coleman* was a Presbyterian, and *Whitebread*, *Ireland*, *Gavan*, *Harcourt*, and *Turner*, were all ejected Miniſters at St. *Bartholomews*. And this courſe of theirs doth more amaze the obſerving world, becauſe Mr. *Dugdale* hath openly ſworn it at the Trial of *Whitebread*, &c. *That it was the opinion of them at* Paris, *and* St. Omers, *to fling all this upon the Presbyterians, that is the death of the King. That if any thing of that nature ſhould happen, they ſhould be ready to give the firſt alarm, and give it out that it was thoſe ſtiff King killing Presbyterians that had done the fact.* (Like *Nero* of old that ſet *Rome* on fire, thinking he could never have a better proſpect of it than by its own light, and then to lay it upon the Chriſtians; and as our Powder-plotters had their Proclamations ready (if their deſign had taken) to have laid it upon the Puritans.) *And ſo they thought they ſhould have brought the Epiſcopal party into their company to revenge themſelves upon the Presbyterians.* To which the Lord Chief Juſtice returned, *It was pretty advice indeed, to have it firſt laid on the Presbyterians, that they might get the Epiſcopal to join and cut them off, and then their own Throats ſhould be cut.* For if they could get theſe old Fanaticks diſpatched out of the way, which (if we may believe them that have turned from them to us, and been the Diſcoverers of the Plot) they hate and fear as much as any of us, they would quickly find out new and freſh Fanaticks; and ſome are ready to think the name of Proteſtant would ſoon be loſt, that we muſt be all termed *Papiſts* or Fanaticks. Now I muſt confeſs to you when I compare theſe things with the words and practices of ſome that would be thought white-boys of the Church of *England*, all the blood of my body flys into my face, (and it's either ſhame or anger, or a paſſion mixt of both, that ſent it thither) to obſerve how ready they are to cloſe with this *Jeſuitical Artifice*, and to turn their ſpleen and indignation upon thoſe whom notwithſtanding the more minute differences amongſt us, I dare not but own as brethren, and eſteem as zealous Proteſtants as our ſelves. In a word, if the Diſſenters be guilty of this Damnable divelliſh Plot, let 'em die for it; if innocent, why are they reviled for it? And ſhould we tempt them to think there is very little difference between guilt and innocency, that whoever is in the fault they muſt bear the blame? *Sir*, it concerns us now to ſpeak, or for ever to be ſilent, and to warn our people, that they do not gratifie the *Papiſts* in this deſign. To conclude, Miniſters in Scripture are ſtiled *Watchmen*, and we had need to warn our flocks of their danger; and they are ſtiled *Fiſhers*, and whileſt others fiſh for Places, let us fiſh for Souls. We need not envy them their Pluralities, and Dignities, and Preferments, that ſlight and ſcorn the moderation we profeſs, if God will but enable us to be diligent, and faithful in our work, and make us inſtrumental to do good to Souls, it will be a greater honour and comfort to us, when we come to die, than all their worldly advantages will be to them. Dear Brother, Farewell. Let you and I take the Apoſtles Exhortation, 1 *Pet.* 5. 2, 3. *Feed the flock which is amongſt us, taking the over-ſight thereof, not by conſtraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over Gods heritage, but being enſamples to the flock; and when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, we ſhall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* And this is the higheſt ambition of,

SIR, Your unworthy Brother and Fellow-labourer.

September. 22. 1679. *N. D.*

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